

Congressman Nadler Celebrates Meaning of Valentines Day by Announcing Reintroduction of the "Permanent Partners Immigration Act"

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WASHINGTON - Using the motif of tomorrow's Valentines Day as a backdrop, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) today announced that he has reintroduced the "The Permanent Partners Immigration Act" in the 108th Congress, which would help countless numbers of bi-national gay and lesbian partnerships to remain together.

The most prominent feature of the "The Permanent Partners Immigration Act" would allow those US Citizens and lawful permanent residents who are in a permanent partnership, to sponsor their partners for immigration purposes, just as any legal spouse would. Currently, because there is no legally recognized marriage between gay and lesbian couples under the immigration law, many bi-national permanent partnerships are torn apart when one partner moves to the United States.

"My bill is simply a matter of common sense and fairness," he added. "Why do we allow the government to tear apart committed and loving couples just because of who they love? The answer is that there is no excuse for this gratuitous cruelty, and my bill would correct that."

"The Permanent Partners Immigration Act" would add the term "or permanent partner" to those sections of the Immigration and Naturalization Act that apply to legally married couples. For purposes of the bill, "permanent partner" is described as "an individual 18 years of age and over who: Is in a committed, intimate relationship with another individual 18 years of age and over in which both parties intend a lifelong commitment; Is financially interdependent with that other individual; Is not married or in a permanent partnership with anyone other than that other individual; Is unable to contract with that other individual a marriage cognizable under [the Immigration and Naturalization Act]; and Is not a first, second, or third degree blood relation of that other individual."

Said Winnie Stachelberg, Political Director of the Human Rights Campaign, "The Human Rights Campaign is grateful for Rep. Nadler's leadership on this very important issue to our community. PPIA is a simple matter of fairness allowing same-sex couples - where one partner is from a different country - to remain together in the United States."

"This bill provides an essential fix for US immigration law which treats loving partners like legal strangers to one another. We look forward to seeing great progress in the 108th session as members recognize the terrible injustice of our current system," said Suzanne Goldberg Board of Directors President at the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force.

"As evidenced in the Task Force Family Policy report, the U.S. still lags behind many countries when it comes to equal rights for same-sex couples," said Lorri L. Jean, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Executive Director. "We call on those in Congress who are opposed to discrimination to support Congressman Nadler's efforts to narrow the gap by recognizing committed, loving, bi-national adult relationships through the Permanent Partners Immigration Act."

"Family unification has always been at the heart of U.S. immigration policy. But as it stands now, federal law prevents many lesbians and gay men from keeping their families," said Christopher E. Anders, an ACLU Legislative Counsel. "Instead of intruding into people's private relationships, Congress should enact fair immigration standards that apply equally to everyone."

While the bill will afford the same immigration benefits to permanent partnerships that those who contract a legal

marriage receive, it will also apply the same exact restrictions and enforcement standards. For example, if a person is found to have entered into a fraudulent permanent partnership for the purposes of obtaining a visa for another person, they will be subject to the same five year maximum imprisonment, or \$250,000 maximum fine, or both, as a person who contracts a fraudulent marriage would. The bill also requires that bi-national couples provide ample proof that they meet the definition of "permanent partners";

"My bill only demands that those people in same-sex permanent partnerships receive equal treatment to those who can get legally married," said Rep. Nadler. "Not an iota more."

Currently Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom all allow people to sponsor their permanent partners for immigration purposes.

The Congressman introduced the same legislation in the 106th and 107th Congresses. It has been endorsed by the New York City Council, and groups nationwide.

Representative Nadler has served in Congress since 1992 where he has worked on many issues of importance to the gay and lesbian community. He represents the 8th District of New York which includes parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

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